



NEWS

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D. C. 20554

News Media Information 202 / 418-0500
Internet: <http://www.fcc.gov>

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See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
February 20, 2014

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WINDSTREAM TO PAY \$2.5 MILLION TO SETTLE INVESTIGATION OF RURAL CALL COMPLETION PRACTICES

Company Also Agrees to Three-Year Compliance Plan

Washington, DC – Windstream Corp. has agreed to pay \$2.5 million to resolve an investigation by the Federal Communications Commission’s Enforcement Bureau into the company’s rural call completion practices. Windstream has also agreed to implement a three-year plan to ensure compliance with FCC requirements designed to combat the serious problem of long-distance calls failing to complete in rural areas.

“It goes without saying that long-distance calls placed to rural areas – or anywhere – should reach their destination,” said Michele Ellison, Chief of the Enforcement Bureau. “Rural call completion failures jeopardize the fundamental promise that all Americans should have access to reliable communications. If companies don’t fulfill this critical responsibility, we will continue to step in.”

In its consent decree with the Enforcement Bureau, Windstream has agreed to:

- Make a voluntary contribution of \$2.5 million to the U.S. Treasury;
- Designate a senior corporate officer to serve as a compliance officer focusing on rural call completion issues;
- Cooperate with the FCC and rural LECs to establish a testing program to evaluate rural call completion performance whenever complaints or data indicate problems;
- Notify intermediate providers (companies that Windstream uses to deliver calls) that may be causing call completion problems and analyze and resolve such problems as soon as practicable;
- Cease using intermediate providers that fail to improve their performance;
- Institute a comprehensive plan to ensure future compliance with FCC rules;
- Report to the FCC any noncompliance with rural call completion rules within 15 days; and
- File initial compliance report in 90 days and annual reports for three years.

“Given the critical importance of long-distance service to people and businesses located in rural areas, I’m pleased that Windstream fully cooperated with the FCC’s investigation and committed to taking tangible steps to ensure more reliable service to rural America,” added Ms. Ellison.

Part of a coordinated effort to address rural call completion problems, the settlement is the second major resolution of a rural call completion investigation in a year. Last March, Level 3 Communications, LLC agreed to make a \$975,000 voluntary contribution to the U.S. Treasury as part of a settlement. In addition to reaching these settlements, the FCC last November adopted new rules that will deter call completion problems and facilitate enforcement by requiring providers to record, retain, and report to the Commission call completion data for long-distance calls.

The Consent Decree is available at http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-14-152A1.pdf.

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